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134 struggling at each step to free oneself from the clinging mud underneath. Long after the rains have ceased the swamp remains, only drying up gradually under the heat of the sun and through drainage into the river, until by mid-December the moisture has all been drawn from the earth, and the bright green grass which has covered it during the rains begins to turn yellow and wither.

797 If my new home was no Eden of beauty, neither was it one free from labour and toil. The territory covered by the mission is, I discovered, quite large. In length it is about 70 miles, extending from Kaka, 55 miles to the north, to a point 15 miles south of Detwok; inland it stretches 15 miles [361] from the river where the Shilluk villages farthest from the river are to be found. The 'parish' thus comprises roughly an area of 1,050 square miles and it is a formidable task for two priests to administer it, especially as the most speedy [493] means of transport available is the push bicycle. However, [771] most of the Christians, who at that time were by no means numerous, lived in the villages near the mission, and large areas were without habitation of any kind, so that the task of parochial visitation did not prove as onerous as it might at first appear. The Shilluk are inveterate wanderers and [166] often drift from the villages in which they were born and baptized as far north as Kaka, or inland to the limits of inhabited country. There they will remain for years quite out of touch with the mission and Christian influence, for rarely if ever do they come in to hear Mass and receive the Sacraments. With all the good will in the world it is impossible for two priests, one with the many affairs of the mission to attend to and the other fully occupied in the school, to keep track of these nomads and follow them in their 763 wanderings. But their heavenly mother, Mary, does not for- 797 get them at the hour of their death, and many is the time that a message from a vigilant catechist, or word brought casually by a passing traveller, or, more often than not, a request for a burial cloth from the pagan relatives of the dying Christian sends the priest post-haste a journey of 15 or 20 miles, in the dry season by bicycle, in the rains on foot, to bring the

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high at the apex. Its construction takes two bricklayers a full fortnight, and then another week is required to build up the bricks on the foundation, six men piling row upon row on edge in a herringbone pattern that leaves plenty of space for the flames to penetrate. Thirty thousand bricks are thus built up into a solid block some nine feet high, and the whole mass is plastered with mud to seal off all the cracks in the walls.

Meanwhile, the District Commissioner, who had promised to use his good offices in procuring sufficient wood for burning the bricks, has been as good as his word, and one day a steamer arrives bringing one hundred and fifty cubic metres of firewood. It looks a small pile when dumped on the shore, but its transport to the brickfield presents a formidable problem when the only wheeled vehicle available is a rickety handcart. Yet if it isn't moved soon, its transport will present no problem at all; the Shilluk will see to that. Fortunately the District Commissioner solves that difficulty too, for he arrives by lorry shortly after the wood, and kindly gives the harassed priest the loan of truck and driver to bring the wood from the river. A strenuous day's work sees the job done and the wood neatly stacked in two piles, one on each side of the kiln.

It is now the end of January. The brickmakers are well into the second fifty thousand bricks, the walls of the six new huts are finished and the construction of the roofs is well in hand. Grass rope is still required, but the number of roofing poles required is now complete and the demand now is for millet stalks. Women come in from the fields bearing huge bundles of them on their heads, and wait patiently until busy Pooh-Bah has time to attend to them. The swamps are emptying rapidly with the fall of the river and in another month the grass will be drying out ready for cutting. The work is going well and is keeping up to the time-table, but all this has not been accomplished in complete harmony and smoothness. The same relentless vigilance has to be kept up day after day to keep the indolent up to scratch; disputes break out among the workmen and often sounds of strife at